



**September, 2018 – January, 2019**

**Evening Book Group - River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation**

Informal discussion of recent fiction, non-fiction, and an occasional older classic. Meets September through June on the second Monday from 7:30 to 9:00pm. If Veteran's Day or Columbus Day fall on a meeting date, the meeting will be held on the second Tuesday. March is also second Tuesday.

**Sept 10 *One Summer: America 1927* by Bill Bryson 544 p. Amazon readers 4.6 stars. MCPL 25 copies**

*A Chicago Tribune* Noteworthy Book; A GoodReads Reader's Choice

The summer of 1927 began with Charles Lindbergh crossing the Atlantic. Meanwhile, Babe Ruth was closing in on the home run record. In Newark, New Jersey, Alvin "Shipwreck" Kelly sat atop a flagpole for twelve days, and in Chicago, the gangster Al Capone was tightening his grip on bootlegging. The first true "talking picture," Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer*, was filmed, forever changing the motion picture industry.

All this and much, much more transpired in the year Americans attempted and accomplished outsized things—and when the twentieth century truly became the American century. *One Summer* transforms it all into narrative nonfiction of the highest order.

Review

"Rollicking, immensely readable. . . . [Bryson's] subject isn't really a year. It's human nature in all its odd and amazing array." —*Chicago Tribune*

"A wonderful romp . . . . Fascinating. . . . Written in a style as effervescent as the time itself." —*The New York Times Book Review*

"Addictively readable." —*The Wall Street Journal*

**Oct 9 *THE WHITES*. By Richard Price writing as Harry Brandt. 333 p, Amazon 3.5 stars, Plenty available in mcpl.**

"A masterpiece, to stand with such earlier Price classics as *Clockers* and *Lush Life* . . . [The Whites has] a compelling plot, yet the real joy of the book lies page by page, line by line, in its brilliant characterizations, rich detail, endless surprises, crackling dialogue, [and] absurdist humor." —*The Washington Post* Most readers will never come close to a New York homicide investigation, but they will instinctively know that Price's insightful crime novel has this world down right.

**Nov 12 – Tues *The Underground Railroad*, by Colson Whitehead. Amazon readers 4 stars, 320 pages Many copies in mcpl, but popular.**

For a smart melding of realism and allegory that combines the violence of slavery and the drama of escape in a myth that speaks to contemporary America. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, the #1 New York Times bestseller from Colson Whitehead, a magnificent tour de force chronicling a young slave's adventures as she makes a desperate bid for freedom in the antebellum South.

**Dec 10 *THE INCARNATIONS*. By Susan Barker. Amazon readers 4 stars, 400 p, 10 copies in mcpl and available.**

New York Times Notable Book of 2015 Kirkus Reviews Best Fiction Book of 2015 In Barker's astonishing novel, a Beijing taxi driver learns of his previous lives as a bit player during 15 centuries of China's past. [A] kaleidoscopically imaginative novel...Barker stitches together an unnervingly perceptive portrait of China and of the enduring influence that its past has on the present." (The New Yorker) "Wildly ambitious . . . [Barker's] dazzling use of language and natural storytelling gifts shine from every paragraph. As with David Mitchell, whose books can similarly hopscotch through times and places, each episode stands alone as a terrific tale in itself. You can become so immersed in one story that you have to almost physically drag yourself away to commit to the next. . . . Mesmerizing storytelling." (Sarah Lyall The New York Times) "Astonishing, amazing . . .

It's the small sagas of Chinese history contained in the letters, together with Barker's vivid descriptions of today's China, that set this book apart as a work of considerable, if unnerving, importance. . . . Tightly wound, intensely wrought, fantastically exciting . . . Beguiling, readable, intense . . . The book's stellar narrative carries us briskly along." (Simon Winchester The New York Times Book Review)

**Jan 7 LINCOLN IN THE BARDO**, by George Saunders 368 pages. Amazon readers 3.5 stars. MCPL 49 copies, 150 holds. Man-Booker Prize.

[An Amazon Best Book of February 2017](#): *Lincoln in the Bardo* is hilariously funny, horribly sad, and utterly surprising. If you can fight past an initial uncertainty about the identity of its narrators, you may find that it's the best thing you've read in years. The year is 1862. President Lincoln, already tormented by the knowledge that he's responsible for the deaths of thousands of young men on the battlefields of the Civil War, loses his beloved eleven-year-old son, Willie, to typhoid. The plot begins after Willie is laid to rest in a cemetery near the White House, where, invisible to the living, ghosts linger, unwilling to relinquish this world for the next. Their bantering conversation, much of it concerned with earthly -- and earthy -- pleasures, counterbalances Lincoln's abject sorrow.